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TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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1. Mideast
2. Iran: Nuclear Program

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media led with PM Sharon's surprise victory at the Likud Central Committee last night. The proposal to move up the party primaries was rejected, 1433 votes to 1329 (51.4-47.6 percent). Blank slips represented 0.9 percent of the total. The turnout was 90 percent. Above pictures of Sharon, Yediot and Maariv bannered: "The Winner" (as opposed to Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu, "The Loser"). Leading media quoted Netanyahu as saying that his camp would win the crucial battle -- the primaries slated to take place in April 2006. Commentators say that Sharon's options -- including leaving the Likud -- are open.

Ha'aretz quoted State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack as saying that Hamas launched attacks on Israel after it issued its statement that it would no longer do so. Saying that McCormack "clearly" doubted the promise and denounced Hamas as a terrorist group, the newspaper quoted him as saying: "We understand the situation in which Israel finds itself and we fully understand Israel's right to defend itself." The media reported that on Monday, the IAF continued with its strikes in the Gaza Strip as more Qassam rockets fell in Israeli territory. Jerusalem Post quoted Islamic Jihad as saying on Monday that it was "unhappy" with Hamas's decision to stop firing rockets at Israel. The newspaper noted this was the first criticism of its kind.

Ha'aretz, Maariv, Hatzofe, and Jerusalem Post printed pictures of new U.S. Ambassador to Israel Richard H. Jones, as he presented his credentials to President Moshe Katsav on Monday.

Yediot reported that the U.S. administration has decided to donate USD 750,000 to the production of an Israeli-Palestinian television drama series that will be called 'Open the Hearts,' with the goal of encouraging co-existence, peace, mutual respect and tolerance between the two peoples. The series will be produced by a non-profit organization of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian parents in cooperation with Channel 2-TV and Palestinian Television. Yediot writes that the producers are still looking for financing before getting down to work, but have already received significant support from the U.S. administration, by means of USAID in the American Embassy Tel Aviv. Yediot cited USAID as saying on Monday that the drama series is meant to generate changes in each of the peoples' beliefs and attitudes toward the other.

All media cited the police as saying on Monday that Sasson Nuriel, a Jerusalem resident, was allegedly kidnapped by Hamas on Wednesday, and that his body was found near Ramallah on Monday. In an unrelated

development, major media reported that on Monday, security forces arrested two Arab terror suspects -- according to Ha'aretz and Yediot, a man in his 30s and a woman in her 60s or 70s -- after a massive terror alert. Israel Radio and the leading Internet news service Ynet reported that IDF forces uncovered and detonated an explosives lab in Qabatiya, south of Jenin, and that 94 Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives were arrested in the West Bank overnight.

Jerusalem Post reported that violence in Gaza and chaos in the Likud have led to the postponement of Sharon's scheduled meetings with Jordan's King Abdullah II and PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas. Israel Radio quoted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak as saying that Sharon is thwarting the peace process and expanding settlements. The radio reported that Abbas will travel to Cairo today for a meeting with Mubarak.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz quoted John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, as saying on Monday that the disengagement from the Gaza Strip has allowed Israel to divert attention from its further expansion into East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories. Jerusalem Post reported that the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel announced on Monday that it was renewing its petition against targeted killings in the wake of Sunday's GOI announcement that it was resuming its policy of assassinating terrorist leaders. Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday, the organization Physicians For Human Rights protested against the closure of the Gaza Strip, which it says has hampered medical treatment of Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, or Egypt.

Leading media quoted British Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister) Gordon Brown as saying on Monday he would visit the Middle East next month to look at ways to rebuild Palestinian infrastructure.

Jerusalem Post named the AmCit whom Israel is planning to deport, reportedly on suspicion that he intended to assassinate Sharon, as Zalman Hatzkolevitch, a Bratslav hassid from New York. The newspaper quoted Rabbi Natan Harush, spiritual head of a Jerusalem-based Bratslav yeshiva, as confirming that Hatzkolevitch speaks Arabic and has visited Muslim countries including Iraq and Lebanon. The newspaper quoted Population Registry spokeswoman Sabine Haddad as saying that the incident was the first time in memory that Israel would be deporting a Jew out of concern over possible security violations.

Hatzofe reported that Sharon has agreed with Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer to create the conditions necessary for allowing British Gas to supply Palestinian natural gas to Israel. The newspaper notes that Israel ceded gas fields to the Palestinians following the Oslo Accords.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Between 'primary now' and 'peace now,' it was 'peace now' that won in the Likud Central Committee.... It is on this that Prime Minister Sharon needs to base his leadership in his party."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Creating a border between Israel and Gaza obligates the Palestinians not to launch Qassams and obligates Israel not to carry out superfluous military operations that harm Palestinian sovereignty."

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Hamas's participation in the PA elections is not irrational.... Israel has no interest in talking with a Palestinian leadership that only represents one part of its nation."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz: "What is needed more than anything is a leader on the other side who is no less forceful than Sharon -- a man who is prepared to fight against the extremists and the enemies of peace, and be more than a partner on paper."

Block Quotes:  
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#### I. "'Peace Now' Defeated 'Primary Now'"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (September 27): "The Likud party primary will not be moved up. The Party's Central Committee rejected the motion to hold the primary earlier than scheduled by a small majority.... A party whose ideological platform is so blurred, so confused, so replete with zigzags and which nevertheless is so close to the center of the Israeli political map, was obliged last night to decide between two opposing political world views: the dovish world view of Prime Minister Sharon as opposed to the hawkish view of former Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.... [Despite the basically in-house characteristic of Monday's vote], Sharon's clear victory over his opponents was also of a clear ideological nature.... Between 'primary now' and 'peace now,' it was 'peace now' that won in the Likud Central Committee. That is the truth, and it is on this that Prime Minister Sharon needs to base his leadership in his party and to pass this essential ideological message down through the party ranks. But this will not be the same Likud movement that Sharon formed with his own two hands a generation ago; Sharon has clearly divorced himself from that party. This will be a new movement, one that is liberated from the tradition of the entire greater Land of Israel, and even a partial greater Land of Israel. This will be a movement that appeals to the center of Israeli society, a movement that has absolutely nothing to do with the tradition of 'two banks to the River Jordan,' and a lot to do with the tradition of 'the occupation is bad for Israel,' as Sharon himself put it."

#### II. "The Escalation Temptation"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (September 27): "In the case of the separation fence, Israel misuses the perfectly legitimate pretext of security concerns to illicitly expand its territory, and there is a similar concern regarding the renewal of targeted assassinations. The massive firing of Qassam rockets at Sderot justifies immediate military action, but it is not grounds for the wholesale abuse of military means in order to launch a general offensive against terrorist organizations.... The unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is an opportunity for the Palestinian Authority to prove it is capable of reining in the terrorist organizations. Mahmoud Abbas failed the first test when he failed to keep the border quiet, and the Qassam attacks justify a military response. That is not to say, however, that Israel should become entangled in an extended operation. Creating a border between Israel and Gaza obligates the Palestinians not to launch Qassams and obligates Israel not to carry out superfluous military operations that harm Palestinian sovereignty.... The Palestinian Legislative Council elections will not be determined by assassinations or by arresting Hamas candidates.... The launching of Qassam rockets at Sderot is a very grave matter. That said, Hamas has undertaken to stop the attacks. The list of potential targets should now be put back in the drawer, and the planned meeting between Abbas and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should go ahead - to demonstrate that Israel and the PA have a shared interest in putting an end to terrorism."

#### III. "The Hamas Dilemma"

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (September 27): "Ariel Sharon and Dr. Yossi Beilin hold views that aren't far from each other: an avowed terrorist organization can't participate in elections. Both men favor Abu-Mazen.... It is worthwhile to fight Hamas with all the might, because Hamas committed to the Cairo agreement and it is now violating it; it shouldn't be allowed to fire from the Gaza Strip each time it feels like bombarding Sderot with Qassam rockets. Hamas has no grounds for doing this, despite claims its chiefs advance such as the lie that Israel caused the rocket accident at Hamas's parade, or that the Negev attacks came in response to IDF strikes against terror in the West Bank.... What's more, Abu Mazen's and the IDF's responses made Hamas chief Mahmoud Zahar proclaim the cessation of rocket fire. He shouldn't be believed.... [However], Hamas's participation in the PA elections is not irrational.... Israel has no interest in talking with a Palestinian leadership that only represents one part of its nation. If the Palestinians have become extremist to the point of supporting the terrorist organizations so strongly, it is important for Israel that the diplomatic process should include Hamas as

well. This might well postpone a final-status agreement between the two nations. [But] it is clear that, should Hamas representatives come to the negotiating table with Israel, they would be made to recognize its right to exist.... Preventing the election of Hamas representatives to the PA's institutions would be turning a blind eye to an emergent reality. It is important for Israel to dialogue with existing Palestinians -- not with the Palestinians it would have liked to see."

#### IV. "If You Lie Down With Missiles"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (September 27): "The Palestinians haven't learned a damn thing. They have a morbid knack for making the biggest, most stupid mistakes whenever the door opens a crack and a chance comes their way to establish a state alongside Israel.... What is the sense in holding a victory parade in Gaza and then firing a massive volley of Qassam rockets into territories that Israel left of its own will? What is the logic in choosing a critical time, when Sharon is fighting for his political life against rebels in his own party, to bombard Israel with 40 Qassams in one night? What do they want? An Israel led by Bibi and Uzi Landau?.... He who goes to bed with Qassams should not be surprised if he wakes up with a boom.... For Israel to make more painful concessions for the sake of an agreement, it will take more than the shameful goings-on at the convention of the Likud Central Committee, and more than last night's vote and its consequences. What is needed more than anything is a leader on the other side who is no less forceful than Sharon -- a man who is prepared to fight against the extremists and the enemies of peace, and be more than a partner on paper."

#### 12. Iran: Nuclear Program:

##### Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The good news is that despite the chaos in Iraq and the destruction in New Orleans, America has not retreated into its shell."

##### Block Quotes:

##### "Ahmadinejad's Smile"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 27): "[Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad came to the UN to examine the limits of his power versus America and its European partners.... The result was not in Ahmadinejad's favor. The Europeans kept their promise to Israel, and last Saturday achieved a small majority for a resolution against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency.... Israel commended the 'step in the right direction' and senior officials predicted that in the next round in November, the decisions will have teeth. The Iranian response sounded, how embarrassing, like Israel's responses to the resolutions against it in the UN and the International Court of Justice. The nuclear confrontation is not over and it is not clear whether Iran will get the bomb before it caves in to the pressures. Russia and China are supporting it and the world oil market will have difficulty coping with another price rise because of sanctions on Iran. Meanwhile, Ahmadinejad can smile. The good news is that despite the chaos in Iraq and the destruction in New Orleans, America has not retreated into its shell but is still dictating the international and regional agenda. This raises the hope that the West will succeed in stopping the threatening Iranian project after all."

JONES